

English Martyrs Church, Didcot

Stained Glass Windows

St Edmund Campion has a special relevance to our church of the English Martyrs in Didcot: not only was he closely connected with this area of the country but a relic of his is preserved in the altar in this church, following the consecration of the church and altar on 18th February, 2017 by Bishop Philip Egan on the fiftieth anniversary of its initial blessing by Bishop Derek Worlock.

Saint John Houghton: pray for us.

Saint Robert Lawrence: pray for us.

Saint Augustine Webster: pray for us.

Saint Thomas More: pray for us.

Saint Edmund Campion: pray for us.

All holy English Martyrs: pray for us.

On 15th December, 2017, two stained glass windows were installed in English Martyrs, Didcot. The windows were made by John Hardman Powell, the artist who made the stained glass windows for the House of Commons. The windows were purchased from English Salvage and are believed to have originated from a private chapel in Cambridge. They needed considerable restoration which was expertly carried out by Chapel Studios of Kings Langley, Hertfordshire who, with local window installation company Primefit, installed the panels in their new frames in the church. The project was financed largely by the Living Our Faith fund. They were blessed by Bishop Philip at Vespers on 16th February, 2018.

The windows depict (on the liturgical south side of the church) Saints John Houghton, Robert Lawrence and Augustine Webster and (on the liturgical north side) St Edmund Campion.

Saints John Houghton, Robert Lawrence and Augustine Webster were Carthusian Priors of the London Charterhouse, the Beauvale Charterhouse and the Axholme Charterhouse respectively. They were the first three martyrs in England in the so-called Reformation after Henry VIII declared himself to be supreme head of the church in England in the 1534 Act of Supremacy. The window depicts them on their way to martyrdom with the caption, “the Bd (Blessed) fathers go joyfully to martyrdom.” Above them, looking out on the scene from his prison cell in the Tower of London, is **St Thomas More** with his daughter, Margaret. St Thomas is recorded as saying, “Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage?” The Carthusian priors were martyred by being hanged, drawn and quartered on 4th May 1535 at Tyburn. St Thomas More was martyred by being beheaded on 6th July 1535 on Tower Hill.



St Edmund Campion was born in London and studied there and in Oxford. He received orders as a deacon in the Church of England but soon entered the English College at Douai on the continent. He became a Jesuit and was ordained priest in 1578. He returned to England, being one of the first Jesuits to be sent on the English Mission, secretly celebrating the Mass and the other Sacraments for those who still held to their Catholic faith in this country. At Stonor Park, near Henley-on-Thames, he published *Decem Rationes* – Ten Reasons – demonstrating the truth of the Catholic faith. He was captured at Lyford in Berkshire and imprisoned in the Tower of London, suffering severe torture. He was tried with St Ralph Sherwin (Proto-martyr of the Venerable English College, Rome) and St Luke Kirby. The window also depicts the Tyburn Tree (the gallows) and the instruments used in the execution. A plaque in the pavement at Tyburn now marks the place where the notorious Tyburn Tree stood. The caption in the window reads, simply, “Bd (Blessed) Edm (Edmund) Campion is hanged drawn and quartered.” He suffered this martyrdom on 1st December 1581 at Tyburn.